



DEPARTMENT OF THE NAVY

ATTACK SQUADRON FIFTY-FIVE
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From: Commanding Officer, Attack Squadron FIFTY-FIVE
To: Chief of Naval Operations (OP-052D)

Subj: 1986 COMMAND HISTORY REPORT

Ref: (a) OPNAVINST 5750.12C

Encl: (1) (c) Attack Squadron FIFTY-FIVE 1986 Chronological History
(2) (U) Attack Squadron FIFTY-FIVE 1986 Basic History
(3) (U) Biography of CDR W. C. CHEWNING, Commanding Officer
(4) (U) Biography of CDR R. E. SUGGS, Executive Officer

1. In accordance with reference (a), enclosures (1) through (4) are forwarded.


W. C. CHEWNING

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ATTACK SQUADRON FIFTY-FIVE 1986 CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY

02 JAN	TERMINATED PORT VISIT NAPLES, ITALY
8-9 JAN	PARTICIPATED IN EXERCISE "DASIX" OFF THE SOUTHERN COAST OF FRANCE
10-14 JAN	PARTICIPATED IN ASW EXERCISE "RAWHIDE"
13 JAN	PARTICIPATED IN PACHINO PRACTICE MINEX (SICILY)
20 JAN	SUCCESSFUL DEPLOYMENT OF "SAMSON" AIR-LAUNCHED DECOY VEHICLE
24-31 JAN	CONDUCTED FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION (FON) OPERATIONS IN THE VICINITY OF LIBYA (OVL)
03-06 FEB	PORT VISIT TRIESTE, ITALY
12-15 FEB	CONDUCTED FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION OPERATIONS IN THE VICINITY OF LIBYA (FONOPS II/OVL II)
16-21 FEB	PORT VISIT CATANIA, SICILY
23-24 FEB	PARTICIPATED IN SIXTH FLEET AMPHIBIOUS LANDING EXERCISE (PHIBLEX) IN TUNISIA
25-27 FEB	PORT VISIT PALERMO, SICILY
06-15 MAR	PORT VISIT NAPLES, ITALY
16-19 MAR	PARTICIPATED IN "SARDINIAEX '86"
23-27 MAR	CONDUCTED OPERATIONS IN THE VICINTY OF LIBYA (OVL III)
25 MAR	DURING THE 0700 HOUR, A-6 AIRCRAFT FROM VA-55 AND VA-85 IDENTIFIED AND ATTACKED A LIBYAN MISSILE BOAT, WHICH WAS DISABLED WITH ROCKEYE AND SUNK WITH HARPOON. THE BOAT WAS SUBSEQUENTLY CONFIRMED AS A "NANUCHKA"-CLASS PGG.
01-02 APR	CONDUCTED OPERATIONS IN THE VICINITY OF LIBYA
04 APR	TRANSFERRED AIRCRAFT BUNO 161677 AND 155718 TO VA-34
05-09 APR	PORT VISIT MALAGA, SPAIN
14-19 APR	CONDUCTED OPERATIONS IN THE VICINITY OF LIBYA WHILE PLANNING LIBYAN STRIKE CONTINGENCIES

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15 APR EXECUTED SUCCESSFUL NIGHT LOW-LEVEL BOMBING RAID ON BENINA AIRFIELD AT BENGHAZI, LIBYA. EXTENSIVE DAMAGE TO AIRCRAFT ON THE GROUND AS WELL AS SURROUNDING STRUCTURES.

21-25 APR PORT VISIT NAPLES, ITALY

27-30 APR CONDUCTED OPERATIONS IN THE VICINITY OF LIBYA

02 MAY USS CORAL SEA OUTCHOPS THE MEDITERRANEAN

08-09 MAY TRAINING ANCHORAGE/PORT VISIT ROTA, SPAIN

13 MAY LONG RANGE SIMULATED WAR-AT-SEA STRIKE CONDUCTED ON USS GUAM MARINE AMPHIBIOUS GROUP IN CENTRAL ATLANTIC

18 MAY SIXTEEN AIRCRAFT FLY-OFF TO NAS OCEANA

19 MAY THE REMAINDER OF VA-55 PERSONNEL EMBARKED ON CV-43 ARRIVE AT NORFOLK NAVAL BASE

22 MAY TRANSFERRED AIRCRAFT BUNO 155619 TO VA-176

01-30 JUN POST-CRUISE STANDDOWN PERIOD

2 JUN TRANSFERRED AIRCRAFT BUNO 161675 TO VA-35

6 JUN TRANSFERRED AIRCRAFT BUNO 161676 TO VA-35

27 JUN COMMANDER W. C. CHEWNING RELIEVED COMMANDER R. Y. WEBER AS COMMANDING OFFICER OF VA-55 IN HANGAR 23 NAS OCEANA

10 JUL TRANSFERRED AIRCRAFT BUNO 149955 TO VA-75

15-18 JUL RENEWED CARRIER QUALIFICATIONS FOR ALL SQUADRON PILOTS

21-25 JUL LIEUTENANTS (b) (6) AND (b) (6) GAVE A FLEET AWARENESS BRIEF AND STATIC DISPLAY AT NAS PENSACOLA, NAS MERIDIAN, NAS CHASE FIELD, AND NAS KINGSVILLE

26 JUL AIRCRAFT BUNO 155583 TRANSFERRED TO NAVAL AIR REWORK FACILITY, NORFOLK, FOR STANDARD DEPOT LEVEL MAINTENANCE (SDLM)

01-30 AUG COMPETITIVE EXERCISES

06 AUG TRANSFERRED AIRCRAFT BUNO 155598 TO VA-75

19-22 AUG COMNAVAIRLANT MAINTENANCE MANAGEMENT TEAM VISIT

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21-26 AUG MEDIUM ATTACK WING ONE INTRUDER DERBY

25 AUG - 22 SEP INTEGRATED WEAPON SYSTEM REVIEW (IWSR)

15 SEP - 30 OCT LT (b) (6) UNDERWENT SIX-WEEK AVIATION WEAPONS AND TACTICS SQUADRON SYLLABUS TRAINING AT YUMA, ARIZONA

17-29 SEP CONDUCTED LIVE MK 82/MK 20 ORDNANCE DROPS

19 SEP PARTICIPATED IN LYNCHBURG, VIRGINIA P.O.W. MEMORIAL DAY FLY-BY

20-21 SEP PARTICIPATED IN 1986 NAS OCEANA AIR SHOW

29 SEP TRANSFERRED AIRCRAFT BUNO 155597 TO NAVAL AIR REWORK FACILITY, NORFOLK, FOR STANDARD DEPOT LEVEL MAINTENANCE (SDLM)

01 OCT PARTICIPATED IN COORDINATED AIR WING MINEX INVOLVING EIGHT A-6E AND 14 F/A-18 DELIVERING MK76'S AT CHARLESTON HARBOR

08 OCT AMCS (b) (6) SELECTED AS MATWING ONE MAINTENANCE CHIEF PETTY OFFICER OF THE YEAR

11 OCT VA-55 AWARDED THE 1986 HUGHES TROPHY FOR INNOVATIVE EXCELLENCE IN THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE DETECTION/RANGING SET (DRS) AND OVERALL OPERATIONAL READINESS

17-19 OCT CONDUCTED SUCCESSFUL DAY/NIGHT INTERDICTION STRIKES, COORDINATED CLOSE-AIR SUPPORT, AND BEACON/LASER ATTACKS DURING THE MULTI-SERVICE EXERCISE "MARKET SQUARE" AT FORT BRAGG, NORTH CAROLINA

22 OCT - 13 NOV ALL AIRCREW PARTICIPATED IN MEDIUM ATTACK STRIKE TRAINING (MAST) AND FLEW SORTIES INCLUDING 4-PLANE COORDINATED STRIKES, SQUADRON WAR-AT-SEA STRIKES, AND NIGHT TERRAIN CLEARANCE

18 NOV TRANSFERRED AIRCRAFT BUNO 152919 TO VA-35

18-21 NOV COMPLETED CONVENTIONAL WEAPONS TACTICAL PROFICIENCY INSPECTION (CWTPI)

24-26 NOV COMPLETED NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM REVIEW

30 NOV - 05 DEC CONDUCTED COORDINATED AIR WING MINEX AT CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA UTILIZING HIGH THREAT TACTICS AND EMPLOYING MK 52/ DST 36

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30 DEC LIEUTENANTS (b) (6) AND (b) (6) EXECUTED A SUCCESSFUL NO
FLAP, NO SLAT, INTENTIONAL WHEELS-UP LANDING OF AK-504 AS A
RESULT OF A FLIGHT HYDRAULIC FAILURE AND SUBSEQUENT
MALFUNCTION

31 DEC LIEUTENANTS (b) (6) AND (b) (6) WERE PRAISED FOR THEIR
HANDLING OF THE PREVIOUS DAY'S AIRCRAFT EMERGENCY IN A "BZ"
MESSAGE FROM VADM DUNLEAVY, COMMANDER NAVAL AIR FORCES U.S.
ATLANTIC FLEET

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ATTACK SQUADRON FIFTY-FIVE 1986 BASIC HISTORY

For the Warhorses of VA-55, 1986 began where 1985 left off--in an atmosphere of tension resulting from political unrest on the European continent. In the wake of terrorist bombings perpetrated by pro-Khadafy Moslems in Rome and Vienna just prior to the New Year, the departure of the squadron from Naples, Italy took on an ominous character. Contingency plans for carrier-based strikes against Libya were already being formulated under JCS directives.

The USS CORAL SEA brought VA-55 within striking distance of the southern coast of France, where on 8-9 January the squadron participated in a day and night exercise named "DASIX." The next two weeks saw the tasking of VA-55 in the ASW exercise, "RAWHIDE" and a practice mining exercise in Sicily. This all coincided with increased strike planning, tasking and refinement of tactics.

Added political friction between the United States and the Khadafy regime in Libya resulted in an increased American presence in the Central Mediterranean. Beginning 24 January, VA-55 participated in the first of several operations designed to assert U.S. maritime freedom. For the next seven days, the USS CORAL SEA conducted freedom of navigation operations (FONOPS) north of the Tripoli Flight Information Region (FIR), defined to the north by 34°-30' North latitude. VA-55 aircraft flew sorties south of the FIR, primarily for surface surveillance coordination (SSC) and tanking support for F/A-18 aircraft flying combat air patrol (CAP).

Following an unscheduled port call in Trieste, Italy on 3 February, the Warhorses resumed operations in the vicinity of Libya (OVL) on 15 February. A two day amphibious landing exercise in Tunisia interrupted successive port calls in Catania and Palermo, Sicily.

March saw an increased tempo of operation for the Warhorses. Following "SARDINIAEX 86," the third series of OVLOPS commenced on 23 March. In addition to tanking support and SSC tasking, VA-55's role was broadened to include SUCAP for U.S. combatants operating at or near the so-called "Line of Death" (32°30' North latitude). Following the initiation of hostile fire by Libyan forces on 24 March, the crew of AK 503, Lieutenant Commander (b) (6) and Commander Warren C. Chewning, struck a Libyan guided missile patrol boat which had been designated a threat to U.S. forces in the Gulf of Sidra.

During the 0700 hour of 25 March they attacked the hostile contact, scoring direct hits with MK 20 cluster weapons. The boat, a "NANUCHKA"-class PGG, later sank as a result of a Harpoon strike from a USS SARATOGA-based A-6.

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For the remainder of March, VA-55 flew missions in defense of the task force until resumption of OVLOPS at the beginning of April. Following several days of uneventful operations, CORAL SEA arrived in Malaga, Spain for what was scheduled to be the final port visit of the Mediterranean deployment.

With the news of yet another terrorist bombing linked to Libya--this time in West Berlin--VA-55 braced for an additional at-sea period. Prior to CORAL SEA's departure from Malaga on 9 April, plans to strike Libyan targets were once again being finalized. Operations in the vicinity of Libya resumed in earnest on 14 April as CORAL SEA positioned herself within airborne striking distance of coastal Libya.

During the early morning hours of 15 April, six A-6 aircraft from VA-55 bombed Benina Airfield at Benghazi, Libya, destroying numerous parked aircraft and causing considerable damage to surrounding hangars, support facilities, aircraft aprons, and other airfield equipment/vehicles in the immediate vicinity. The political effect of the raid was significant and far-reaching. After a brief period in which CORAL SEA stood by for possible follow-up strikes, the ship was allowed to exit the Mediterranean to take on supplies at Rota, Spain and commence its return trip to CONUS.

During the Atlantic transit, VA-55 took part in a long-range war-at-sea practice strike several hundred miles west of Bermuda. The objective of the 13 May exercise was to simulate a strike on a Soviet surface action group (SAG) simulated by the USS GUAM and her Marine Amphibious Group. This was the last exercise involving VA-55 prior to the Air Wing Thirteen "fly-off" from CORAL SEA on 18 May. Following the return of the remainder of the squadron the next day, VA-55 stood down for the next several weeks to effect maintenance of aircraft and to allow squadron personnel to take advantage of a well-earned shore leave period.

On 27 June, command of the squadron passed from Commander Robin Y. Weber to Commander Warren C. Chewing at a ceremony in Hangar 23 at NAS Oceana. Commander Ralph E. Suggs assumed the duties of the Executive Officer.

In July, VA-55's aircrew renewed their carrier landing qualifications in a four-day evolution aboard the CORAL SEA. During the following week, two junior officers, Lieutenants (b) (6) and (b) (6), delivered briefs to four East coast training commands as part of a "fleet awareness" program.

August was a month of demanding aircrew competitive exercises in preparation for the Intruder Derby 21-26 August.

September saw the departure of twenty-five squadron personnel to MCAS Yuma, Arizona, for underwent an intensive six-week training syllabus at the Marine Weapons and Tactics Squadron. Other events included live ordnance

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drops from 17-29 September, and aerobatic performances by Warhorse A-6's in successive air demonstrations during the NAS Oceana Open House Air Show, 19-21 September.

October began with a coordinated Air Wing Minex at Charleston, South Carolina, in which eight A-6s played a major role. For its part in Exercise "Market Square," a massive multi-service exercise staged at Fort Bragg, North Carolina from 17-19 October, VA-55 conducted day and night interdiction strikes, coordinated close-air support, and employment of laser bombing tactics. Within a week, all squadron aircrew were engaged in the comprehensive MAST (Medium Attack Strike Training) program as a prelude to several weeks of intensive flying involving coordinated night attacks, war-at-sea strikes, and other missions designed to improve proficiency in low-level terrain clearance flights.

In the month of November, VA-55 underwent a thorough evaluation of its conventional weapons technical proficiency (from 18-21 Nov), as well as a review of the nuclear weapons program (from 24-26 Nov.). Results of both of these were superlative.

The beginning of December brought the return of the Warhorses to the Charleston mining range, where mining tactics were refined and weapon systems employed in a realistic setting.

With the approach of Christmas, flight hours were curtailed considerably as squadron personnel took advantage of a generous Holiday leave policy. One of the last squadron sorties of 1986 involved AK 504 flown by Lieutenants (b) (6) and (b) (6). On the afternoon of 30 December, AK 504 experienced a flight hydraulic failure resulting in a landing gear malfunction which prevented a conventional landing. Consequently, the crew was forced to attempt a no-flap, no-slat, wheels-up emergency landing, which they executed flawlessly, without injury, and with minimal damage to their aircraft. The next day, Lieutenants (b) (6) and (b) (6) were praised for their superb airmanship in a personal message from Vice Admiral Dunleavy, Commander, Naval Air Forces Atlantic.

Nineteen eighty-six was an exceptional year for VA-55 in terms of individual achievements. On 8 October, Aviation Maintenance Senior Chief (b) (6) was named Medium Attack Wing One's Chief Petty Officer of the Year. The same week LT (b) (6) was named by COMNAVAIRLANT as the 1986 Naval Flight Officer of the Year. Later in the month Lieutenants (b) (6) and (b) (6) were named recipients of the 1986 Wright Brothers Memorial Foundation Junior Officer of the Year Award.

As a unit, VA-55 excelled: her accomplishments were well recognized. In October the command was awarded the coveted Hughes Trophy and, for its performance during critical Mediterranean operations (including the Libyan strike), the Navy Unit Commendation, the Navy Expeditionary Medal, and the Armed Forces Expeditionary Medal.

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**COMMANDER
WARREN C. CHEWNING
United States Navy**

Commander Warren C. Chewning, a native of (b) (6), graduated from Louisiana State University in May 1969 and was commissioned an Ensign through the Naval Aviation Officer Candidate Program in 1969. Following flight training at VT-10 in Pensacola, Florida and VT-86 in Glynco, Georgia, he received his wings in May 1970.

Upon completion of replacement training as an A-6 bombardier/navigator at Attack Squadron FORTY-TWO in Virginia Beach, Virginia, Commander Chewning reported to Attack Squadron THIRTY-FIVE aboard USS AMERICA (CVA-66). There he made one Mediterranean deployment and one combat deployment to Southeast Asia. His next tour of duty was with Attack Squadron FORTY-TWO as a flight instructor, where he held the positions of NATOPS and Schedules Officer until April 1976.

He then reported aboard USS NIMITZ (CVN-68) as Assistant Carrier Air Traffic Control Center Officer and Assistant Air Operations Officer for two Mediterranean deployments. In July 1978, Commander Chewning reported to the staff of Commander, Medium Attack Wing ONE as A-6 Model Manager and NATOPS Officer. He subsequently joined Attack Squadron SIXTY-FIVE in July 1981, where he served as Assistant Operations Officer and as Maintenance Officer while making two deployments to the Mediterranean aboard USS EISENHOWER (CVN-69). After a brief tour with Commander Naval Air Force, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, Commander Chewning reported for duty to Attack Squadron FIFTY-FIVE as Executive Officer.

Commander Chewning has over 3,500 flight hours, of which 3,400 are in the A-6 Intruder, and has logged over 900 carrier landings. He flew 149 combat missions during the Vietnam conflict and two during 1986 Libyan operations. His awards include two individual Air Medals, nine Strike Flight Air Medals, five Navy Commendation Medals with combat "V", and various service and campaign medals.

**COMMANDER
RALPH E. SUGGS
United States Navy**

Commander Ralph E. "Benny" Suggs, a native of (b) (6) graduated from North Carolina State University in May 1969 and was commissioned an Ensign through the Naval Aviation Officer Candidate Program in February 1970, and reported to Meridian, Mississippi for basic jet training. Commander Suggs received his Naval Aviator wings in Kingsville, Texas in May 1971 following advanced jet training.

Upon completion of replacement training as an A-6 pilot in Attack Squadron FORTY-TWO, Commander Suggs reported to Attack Squadron SEVENTY-FIVE, where he served as Squadron First Lieutenant, Line Division Officer, NATOPS Officer, and Landing Signal Officer (LSO). After two Mediterranean deployments aboard USS SARATOGA (CV-60), he returned to Attack Squadron FORTY-TWO as an Instructor Pilot and Carrier Qualification Phase Head. Upon completion of A-7E cross training in April 1979, he was assigned to Carrier Air wing SIX as Air Wing LSO, and deployed aboard USS INDEPENDENCE (CV-62). Following six months of training at the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, Virginia and a brief reassignment to Attack Squadron FORTY-TWO, Commander Suggs joined Attack Squadron THIRTY-FIVE, then deployed in the Mediterranean aboard USS NIMITZ (CVN-68). He served fourteen months as the squadron's Operations Officer and made successive deployments aboard USS CARL VINSON (CVN-70), during her Caribbean shakedown cruise, and USS NIMITZ, once again to the Mediterranean. Following a tour as Attack Squadron THIRTY-FIVE's Maintenance Officer, Commander Suggs was assigned to Medium Attack Wing ONE as Readiness Officer in June 1984. In November 1984 he was selected as Flag Secretary for the Commander-in-Chief, U.S. Atlantic Fleet, a billet he held until April 1986.

After a brief period of A-6 refresher training with Attack Squadron FORTY-TWO, Commander Suggs reported in June 1986 to Attack Squadron FIFTY-FIVE as Executive Officer.

Commander Suggs has over 3100 flight hours, of which 2300 are in the A-6 Intruder, and has 650 carrier landings. His awards include the Defense Meritorious Service Medal and two Navy Commendation Medals.

He is married to the former (b) (6) of (b) (6) (b) (6). They reside in (b) (6) with their son, (b) (6).